

Others Had It Worse: Sour Dock, Moonshine, & Hard Times in Davis County, Iowa

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Aley, Ginette. "Others Had It Worse: Sour Dock, Moonshine, & Hard Times in Davis County, Iowa." *The Annals of Iowa* 73 (2014), 183-183.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12075>

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and establishes a basis for interpreting and evaluating the house in the context of regional, state, and local history.

Others Had It Worse: Sour Dock, Moonshine, & Hard Times in Davis County, Iowa, by Vetra Melrose Padget Covert and Chris D. Baker. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013. xi, 124 pp. Map, illustrations, bibliography. \$17.50 paperback.

Reviewer Ginette Aley is a Carey Fellow at Kansas State University and teaches history at Washburn University. She is the coeditor, with J. L. Anderson, of *Union Heartland: The Midwestern Home Front during the Civil War* (2013).

For millions of struggling farm families, the Roaring Twenties meant privation and poverty, not the excess and prosperity typically associated with the era. In *Others Had it Worse*, Chris D. Baker shares and interprets his grandmother Vetra Melrose Padget Covert's recollections of her impoverished rural childhood during the 1920s in southern Iowa. Hard times and harsh circumstances formed the backdrop for complicated family relationships that often bore the brunt of Covert's father's participation in an illegal liquor trade.

Readers glimpse another, more gritty Iowa in these pages, not unlike the tensions described in Nebraskan Mari Sandoz's *Old Jules*. Students of the history of Iowa and the rural Midwest will gain fresh perspectives on a poor young woman's sense of the place and time, as she reflects on it later in life in rather brief, simplistic, and pragmatic terms. Coauthor Baker frames the topics in relatable headings such as Family Life, Getting By, The Neighbors, Moonshine, and Social Life, which are complemented by revealing photos. One cannot help but be drawn in by Covert's persistence among such difficulties and meager pleasures.

The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers, edited by Brian Dolinar. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013. The New Black Studies Series. xliii, 286 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Julia Mickenberg is associate professor of American studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of "Left at Home in Iowa: Progressive Regionalists and the WPA Guide to 1930s Iowa" (*Annals of Iowa*, 1997).

It was like a blast from the past when I was asked to review *The Negro in Illinois: The WPA Papers*. Back when I was in graduate school, I wrote a seminar paper on the "The Negro in Illinois," a project co-directed by the African American writer and librarian Arna Bontemps and the white proletarian writer Jack Conroy, both of whom, as Brian